

— *FORMATIVE FIELDS* —

UK CROP CIRCLES OF 2000

This year's bountiful yield of crop glyphs featured circular, triangular, diamond-shaped and grid-like patterns as well as some unusual optical effects.

In 1990, the crop circle mystery burst into the international media with a flurry of utterly extraordinary patterns etched into the fields. Until then, the phenomenon had been just another quaint, Fortean eccentricity; but these new arrivals leapt from the formerly simple circles and rings into an inexplicable evolution of complex designs which would blossom and develop over the next 10 years.

As the century turned and another decade began, expectations were high that the phenomenon would take another quantum leap. It didn't quite happen like that, but the continuing progress of its serene, upward curve ensured that the marvels of the 2000 crop circle season were no disappointment.

Things took a while to get going, with just a handful of formations gracing the fields between April and June, but of these, on 20 May, Alton Barnes—the classic circle-site of old—yielded up a sign of things to come with a pentagonal design which played 3D tricks with the eyes.

The era of optical-illusion crop formations had dawned and would be followed up with some truly mesmerising patterns later in the summer. A chequerboard grid of rectangles at Windmill Hill on 18 June gave the startling effect of simultaneously appearing as a sphere. A "Chinese puzzle" emblem, which arrived at Bishops Cannings on the same night, resembled three pentagrams seen in perspective, clinging to the surface of another sphere.

The incorporation of triangles in crop designs also became commonplace. One such example arrived next to the West Kennett longbarrow near Avebury on 2 June. Initially unimpressive with a very messy lay, the triangular outline which appeared there, ringed with 12 flattened smaller triangles, suddenly surprised everyone on 3 June by transforming itself overnight into an exquisite emblem of standing and flattened areas, the formerly haphazard lay miraculously combed into good order!

In fact, the whole Kennett/Silbury Hill area was very much the major hotbed of circular activity this year, with virtually every other field in a square mile being visited by a formation. Mystics say this was due to a cylindrical shaft suddenly and unexpectedly opening up in the top of the ancient and mysterious Silbury Hill itself. Though this was almost certainly due, in part at least, to the shoddy workmanship over 200 years ago of treasure-hunting excavators who didn't fill in their diggings properly and simply plugged the top, many felt that potent forces were released when the plug finally collapsed inwards. Strange lights were seen over the Hill in the weeks preceding the hole's arrival. Whatever the real circumstances (however mundane) behind the subsidence, those who believe Silbury to be an accumulator of "Earth energy" hold that its unexpected opening must have led to a significant release of the focused natural power that fires up this sacred landscape.

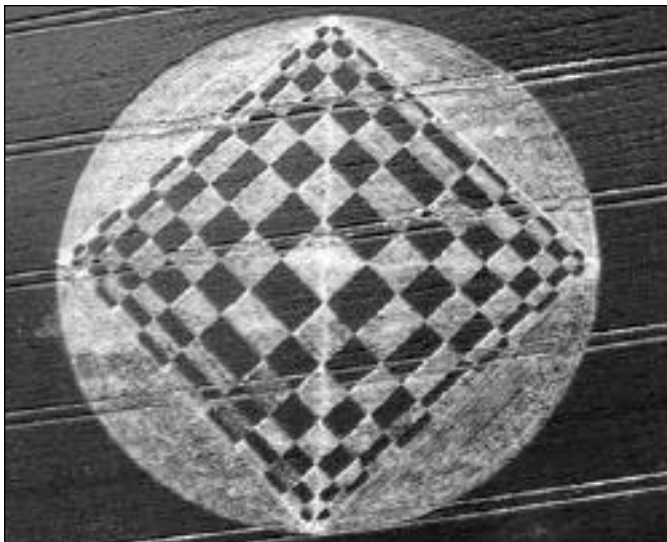
Of the formations which appeared in this hotspot, the most shattering was a grid, like a circuit board, comprising 1,600 rectangular components, which appeared at East Kennett on 2 July. The geometrical logic of how one would go about creating such a pattern—with merging sections of standing squares becoming flattened squares—troubled even the best crop circle geometers. On the ground, one could not make head nor tail of how the design worked, nor of how any human could possibly have attempted it.

This formation, with its unique qualities, actually grabbed the attention of the newspapers; but the media, except for publishing one or two more positive pieces, soon slipped back into the easy scepticism which circle enthusiasts have come to expect, with a variety of hoax-promoting articles and letters. Several man-made circles were allegedly filmed in the making, the plan being for the footage to be broadcast later on television—to the

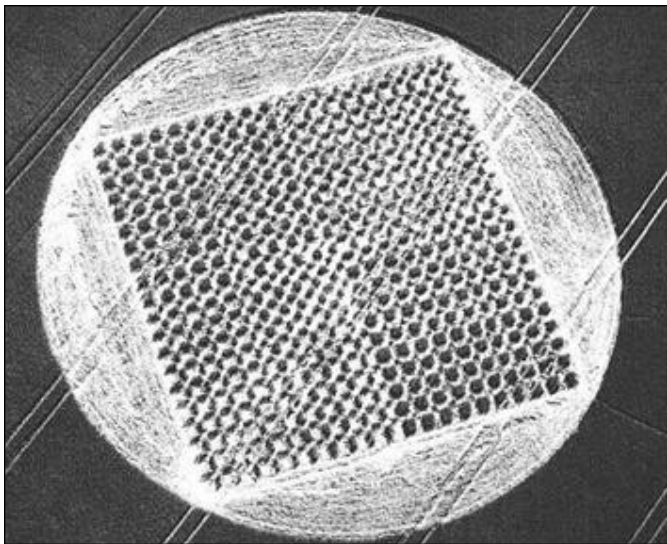
Introduction
by Andy Thomas © 2000

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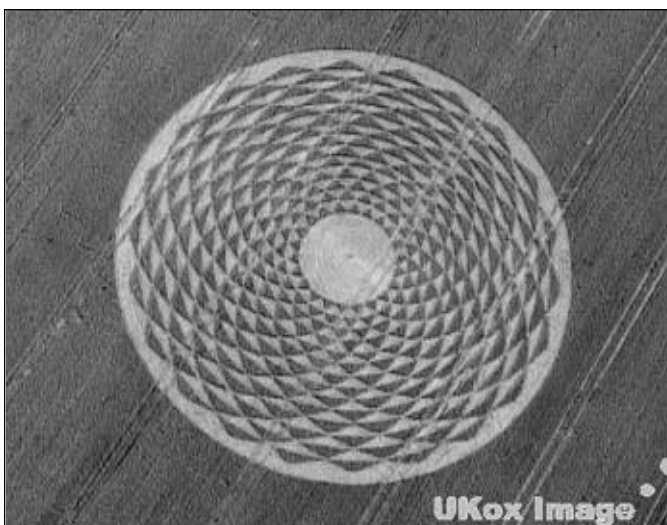
Images from
Crop Circle Connector website:
www.cropcircleconnector.com



Windmill Hill, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 18th June.
(Image © Francine Blake/Wiltshire Crop Circle Study Group 2000)



East Kennett, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 2nd July.
(Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



Woodborough Hill, near Alton Priors, Wiltshire. Reported 13th August.
(Image © Steve Alexander 2000)

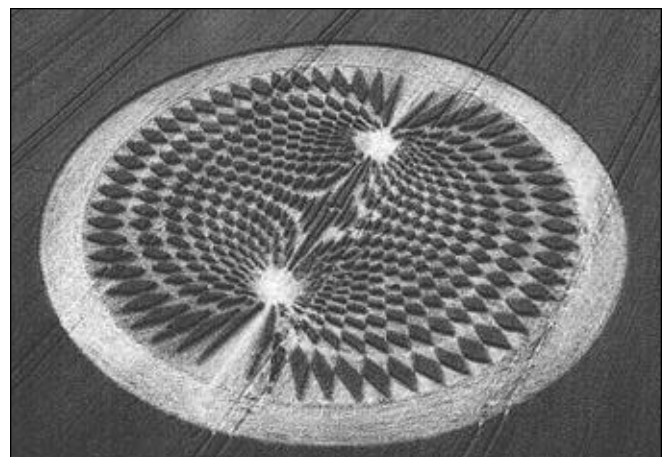
resigned yawns of researchers who have seen and survived all this before.

The pronouncement by veteran circle researcher Colin Andrews—that he now believes the formations are man-made in 80% of cases, the rest being caused by natural magnetism—achieved much publicity for the phenomenon but was met with cynicism and indifference by some sceptics and believers alike. As no official paper has yet been produced for scrutiny, this latest assertion remains just another theory until the necessary evidence is put forward.

The notion that people are responsible for creating such a large proportion of formations has been severely challenged by many researchers who point to a lot of details which suggest otherwise. However, the notion that human hoaxers are responsible for at least a certain *quota* of crop glyphs seems now to have been widely absorbed by the crop circle community without too much harm—some considering that, for good or for ill, what man-made formations there are simply add to the overall mystery and interact with the landscape in their own way. Many formations, though, continue to defy the idea that humans could create such complexity and beauty without error in conditions of darkness.

The generally accepted masterpiece of the year was certainly the breathtakingly fantastic pattern which arrived at Avebury Trusloe on 22 July. A staggering series of standing and flattened diamonds, splayed outwards in a containing circle, gave the impression (perhaps ironically, given the Andrews pronouncement) of particles held in magnetic fields. Despite the inevitable distracting claims of authorship, made by the usual egocentric "artists" in one newspaper—as ever, without a scrap of evidence to support them—even seasoned researchers were open-mouthed in awe at this show-stopper. But the show didn't stop there, for another astonishing pattern demonstrating similar mathematical principles appeared at Woodborough Hill on 13 August.

Perhaps the event that best illustrated just how far the phenomenon has come in the last 10 years was the very unusual formation which occurred at Everleigh Ashes on 19 July. In 1989, the cereal world had got a tiny taste of the developments which would rock it to its young foundations the following year, when the last formation of that season, at Winterbourne Stoke, was found to be a circle split into four quarters of linear crop lay instead of a conventional swirl. The Everleigh Ashes formation of 2000 saw four such quartered circles aligned as a Celtic cross orbiting a round barrow, which made up the central component of the pattern. On the antique mound itself, the grass had been



Avebury Trusloe, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 22 July.
(Image © Steve Alexander 2000)

swirled to complete the effect. How things have moved on!

The photographs which accompany this article speak for the many beautiful crop formations which arrived this year. But not all of this year's efforts were confined within the borders of Wiltshire; other counties, including Hampshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Yorkshire, Sussex and others besides, all played their part in the continuing development, as did the many other countries which now regularly receive their own gifts each year.

We have learnt much over the last decade—but not the answer to the continuing mystery. That still eludes, whether the solution be extraterrestrial, geophysical, psychic or spiritual. But the devotees seeking widely accepted credibility for this unique enigma have a passion that has not diminished, despite all the cutting scepticism and problems encountered.

This year, the three-day international Glastonbury Symposium celebrated its 10th anniversary with a radiant event which I was privileged to be a part of, as people from around the world came together to reaffirm their enthusiasm for these amazing patterns, associated issues and the widening mindsets they engender. Throughout the summer, other events took place which brought like-minded individuals together. Each year, numbers at the best of these events swell, not diminish. There are many who see beyond the scepticism and hype.

In a recent Internet article, the BBC Online science correspondent Dr David Whitehouse described anyone who believed that crop circles were not made by people as "misguided, a fool or a charlatan". Clearly, there are many prepared to risk being perceived as all of these in their pursuit of the truth.

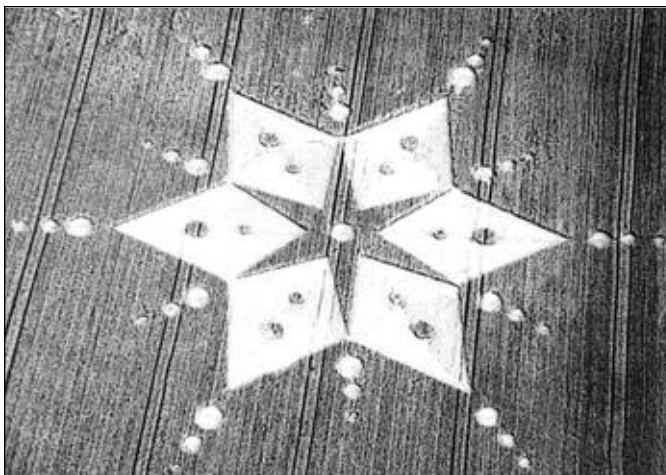
About the Author:

Andy Thomas is editor of the bimonthly crop circle journal *SC*, a founder member of the Southern Circular Research team, and author of three books exploring aspects of the circles: *Fields Of Mystery*, *Quest For Contact* (with Paul Bura), and *Vital Signs*.

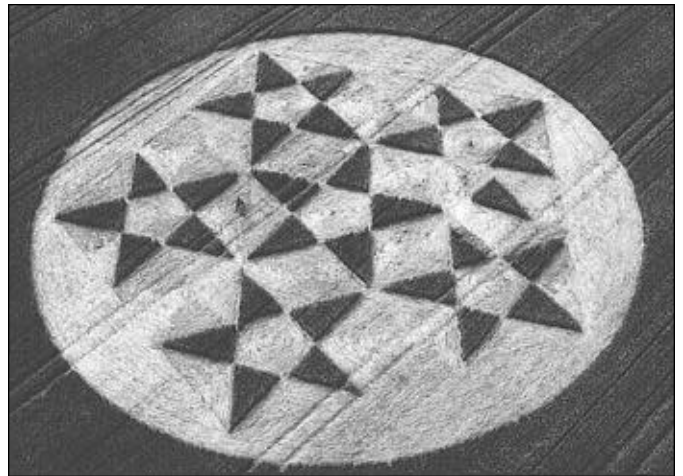
For more information and images, please contact :

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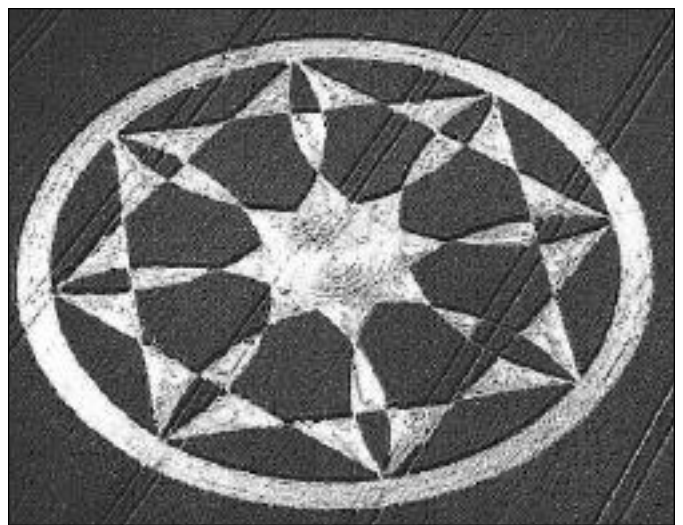
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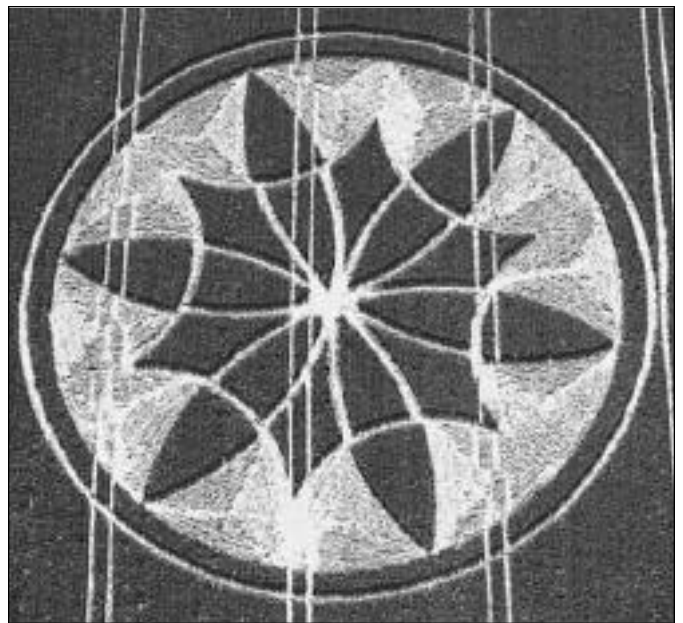
Istead Rise, near Gravesend, Kent. Reported 29th July.
(Image © Andrew King 2000)



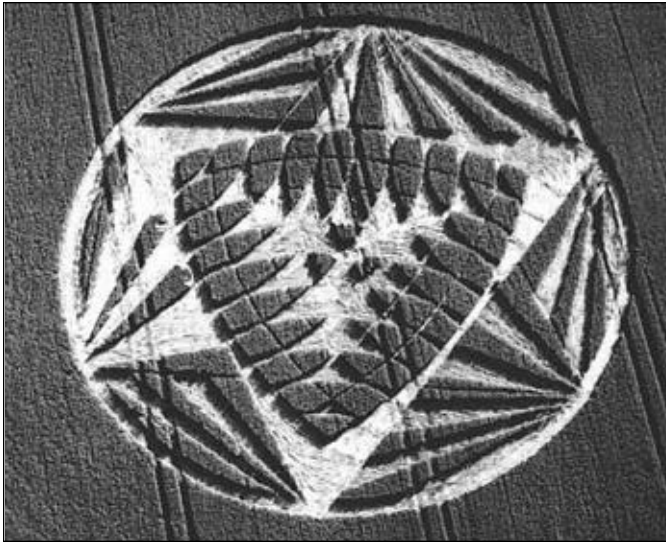
Silbury Hill, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 25th July.
(Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



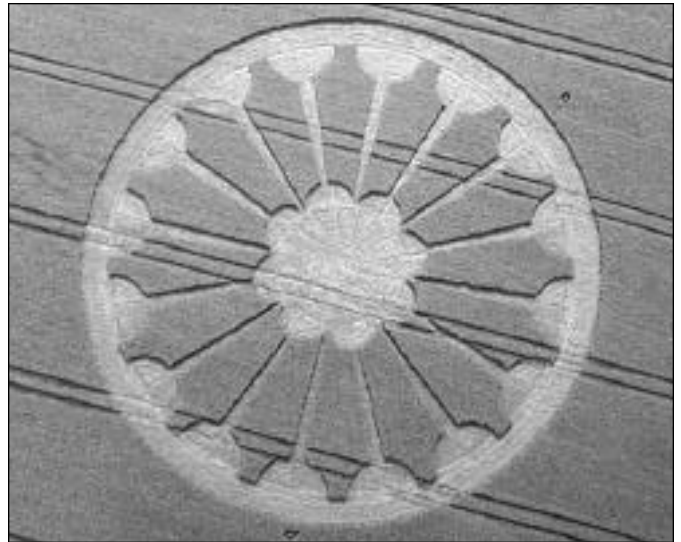
Bishop Cannings, near Devizes, Wiltshire. Reported 27th June.
(Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



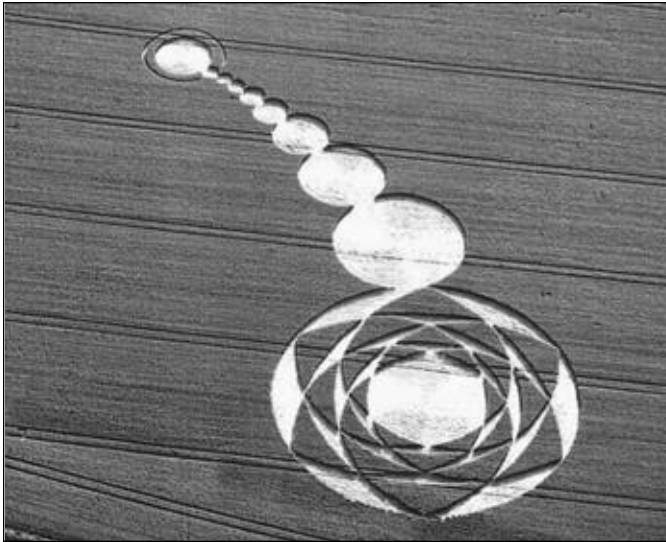
Under Milk Hill, near Alton Barnes, Wiltshire. Reported 1st July.
(Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



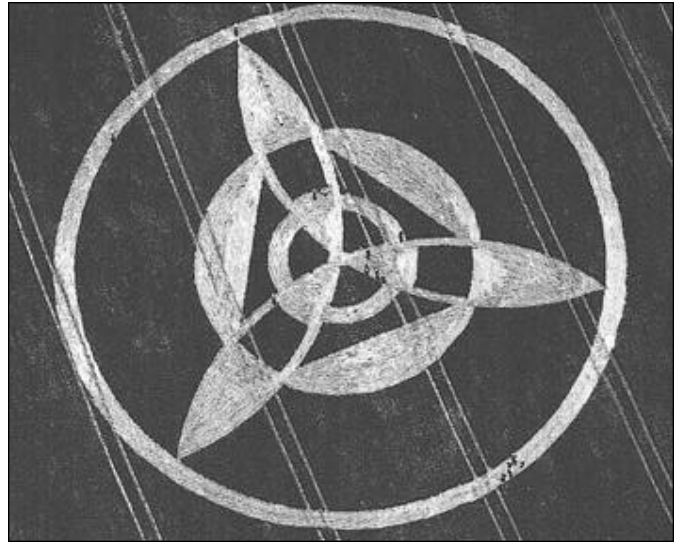
Allington Down, near Devizes, Wiltshire. Reported 1st August.
 (Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



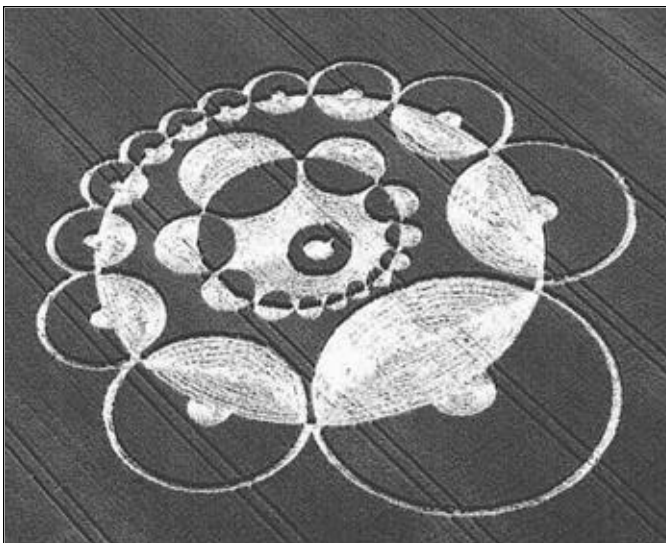
South Field, Alton Priors, Wiltshire. Reported 19th June.
 (Image © Francine Blake/Wiltshire Crop Circle Study Group 2000)



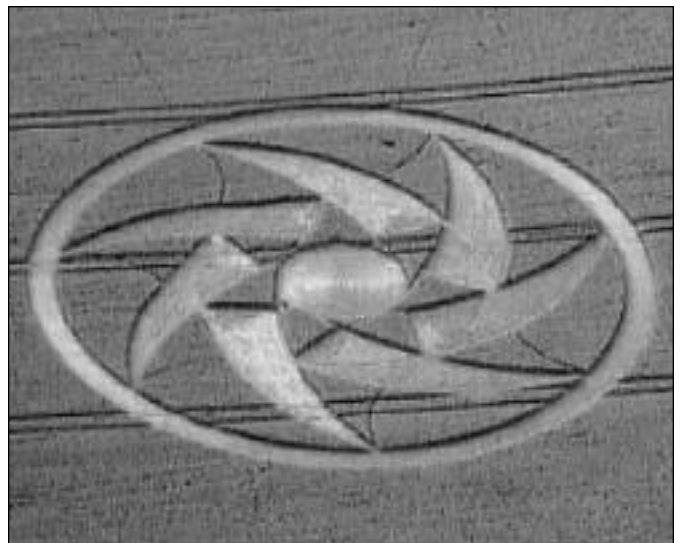
Uffington White Horse, near Woolstone, Oxfordshire. Reported 22nd July.
 (Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



White Hill, near Lockeridge Dene, Wiltshire. Reported 19th July.
 (Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



Bishop's Sutton, near Winchester, Hampshire. Reported 15th July.
 (Image © Steve Alexander 2000)



Broadbury Banks, near Wilsford, Wiltshire. Reported 5th August.
 (Image © Steve Alexander 2000)